



Philippines hits 271M negotiated sales, bags recognition at the ITB Berlin 2023



DOT leads Philippine visa reforms convergence



DOT-DOLE Tourism Job Fairs offer more than 8K jobs



DOT celebrates Women's Month Highlighting 16 Distinguished Women in the Tourism Sector

DOT chief unveils National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) 2023-2028 at stakeholders' summit



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Launch of DOT GAD Corner and Day Care and Child-Minding Center

Through the Department of Tourism (DOT) Gender and Development Focal Point System (GFPS) in collaboration with the Administrative Service-Human Resource Division, the Day Care and Child-Minding Center, inaugurated by Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco on March 16, shall provide a safe space where the DOT employees can entrust their children while they are at work, free of charge. This is meant to provide working mother's equal rights with men and to contribute to the overall health and wellness of both the mother and child.

The center, which can accommodate up to 15 children, features play and activity, learning, dining, as well as sleeping areas.



On the same day of the launching of the Day Care and Child-Minding Center at the Department of Tourism (DOT) Central Office, Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco also led the unveiling of the Gender and Development (GAD) Corner, which will serve as an Information Dissemination Portal of the Department's GAD-related accomplishments, programs, activities, laws and mandates, and particulars on health, wellness, security and assistance.

Secretary Frasco was joined by Undersecretaries Shereen Gail C. Yu-Pamintuan, Shahlimar Hofer Tamano, and Ferdinand Jumapao, Assistant Secretaries Rica Bueno, Verna Buensucos, and Reynaldo Ching, other officials, and employees of the Department. **DOT**

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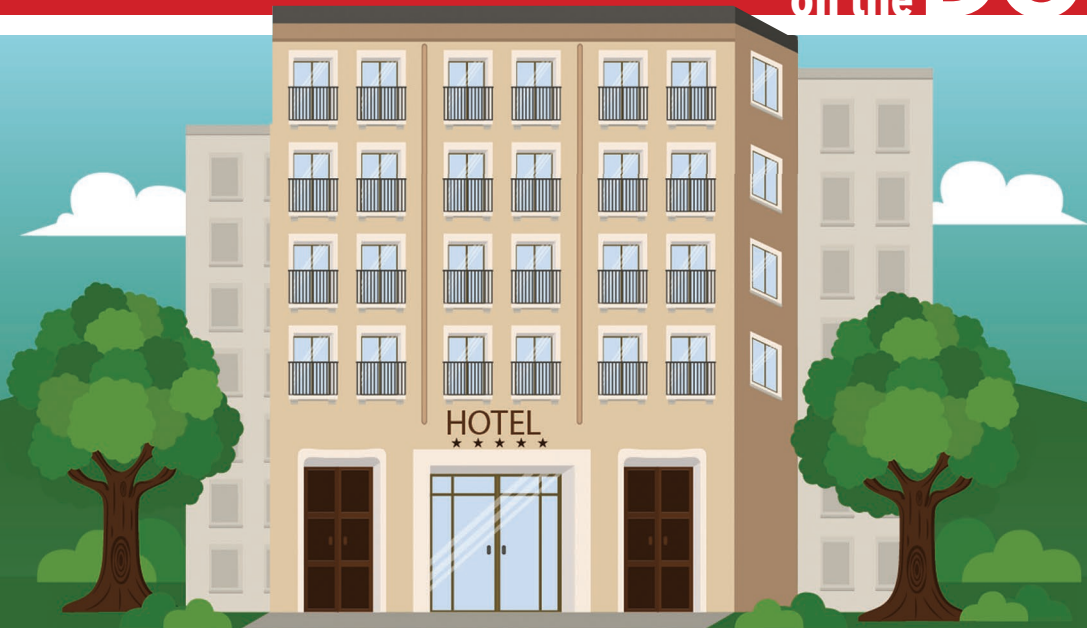
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DOT issues guidelines pushing for more openness for tourism enterprises



As part of its measures to support the national government's liberalization of the COVID-19 restrictions in the country, the Department of Tourism (DOT) on March 5 has released a Memorandum Circular further easing health and safety guidelines governing the operations of tourism establishments, pushing for the further opening of the country to tourists and travelers.

Based on the DOT Memorandum Circular (MC) 2023-0002, the presentation of proof of full vaccination as well as the wearing of face masks in tourism enterprises will no longer be required.

The DOT MC 2023-0002, Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco said, is a follow-through of the efforts of the Department, which began last year to assist the economic hardships of tourism stakeholders by issuing regulations pushing for the opening up of the country to tourism. The Tourism Department had made similar issuances last year through its Office of Tourism Standards and Regulation (OTSR) and regional offices, immediately following the President's signing of Executive Order No. 7, which mandated the voluntary mask wearing in indoor and outdoor settings.

To recall, the DOT, through the Office of Tourism Standards and Regulations (OTSR), issued Memorandum 2022-509 last November 22, 2022, to the DOT Regional Offices reiterating the voluntary wearing of face masks and the waning requirement on the presentation of proof of full vaccination in tourism enterprises. Meanwhile, last month, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Safety Seal Secretariat announced the discontinuance of the Safety Seal Certification Program.

"This latest issuance on the relaxed health and safety guidelines for tourism establishments reinforces the Department of Tourism's commitment towards addressing the economic hardships of the tourism industry brought about by the lockdowns and restrictions of

the pandemic. It sends the important message across that, under the Marcos Administration, our country is open for tourism, and that we are keeping up with global practices on tourism operations that have already opened up worldwide," Secretary Frasco said.

Through DOT MC 2023-0002, the DOT ordered the lifting of the previous administration's earlier requirement for tourism establishments to install plastic, acrylic barriers and dividers in designated areas, and likewise ordered for the removal of signages, visual cues, and other installations on mandatory protocols, which have since been liberalized by the national government.

In adherence to the country's policy shifts on minimum public health standards, the DOT also announced that it shall no longer issue the PH Safety Seal and WTTC Safe Travels Stamp (STS) to tourism enterprises found compliant to guidelines set in accordance with Joint Memorandum Circular No. 21-01 issued by the DOT and other national government agencies on the Safety Seal Certification Program, and Memorandum Circular 2022-003, respectively.

Further, in submitting monthly reports to the DOT's Regional Offices, accommodation establishments (AE) will no longer need to include the number, nature of work, and length of stay of permitted guests, as well as names of companies or businesses with employees that are booked with the establishment, which are details that the Department previously required from accredited AEs through DOT Administrative Order 2022-001. **DOT**



PHILIPPINES

Philippines comes back with biggest delegation to ITB Berlin, bags sustainable tourism recognitions

Returning to the global scene with the biggest delegation of tourism stakeholders to date, the Philippines made a big comeback at the Internationale Tourismus-Börse (ITB) 2023 Convention in Messe Berlin, Germany on 07 to 09 March 2023, spearheaded by the Department of Tourism (DOT) and its marketing and promotion arm, the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines.

DOT Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco led the combined group of 26 co-exhibitors from the public and private sector consisting of 40 delegates attending the event. TPB Chief Operating Officer Margarita Nograles and other DOT officials also joined the Secretary. The Philippines is expected to highlight the country's tourism developments and product offerings to over 160,000 visitors expected to attend the world's largest travel and tourism trade fair.

The Philippines' participation at the ITB Berlin aims to strengthen the country's global tourism campaign through partnership opportunities with various tourism private sectors including tour operators, online travel agencies, new online distribution platforms, travel websites and communities, journalists, and influencers, among others.

"The ITB Berlin holds great opportunities for the Philippines to showcase to the world its award-winning destinations such as Boracay, Cebu, Siargao, and Palawan, and also to include Banaue, Intramuros, and South Cotabato, among others. We also look forward to giving the world a view into our distinct and diverse culture, as well as the country's best asset: the warmth and hospitality of the Filipino people," said Secretary Frasco.

"Our participation is pursuant to further positioning the Philippines as a tourism powerhouse in Asia, and hopefully the world in the years ahead," she added, citing also that the ITB attendance will help fast-track the recovery efforts by the DOT of the pandemic-hit industry.

The Philippines booth at the ITB Berlin featured the country's rich culture and sustainable tourism through the artistic works of T'nalak weaver Myrna Pula of South Cotabato and Yakan Weaver and Entrepreneur Angelita Pichay Ilul of Zamboanga. Moreover, visitors got a taste of Philippine coffee and chocolates through Kape de Filipina, a brand offering products meticulously grown by farmers and communities in the Philippines.

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Philippines comes back with biggest delegation to ITB Berlin, bags sustainable tourism recognitions

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The DOT and TPB will then host a cocktail reception for international buyers, Philippine sellers and industry partners on the second day of the convention where they were treated with traditional Filipino cuisine by Ayan, a Filipino street food restaurant based in Berlin and live performances from Lapu Lapu Arnis de Abanico, Songwriter and Singer David Mercado and Princess Virtudazo.

"What we have showcased in this year's ITB is just a glimpse of our country's rich culture and wide range of tourism offerings, curated to bring more ideas and inspiration to promote the Philippines as a meaningful and purposeful destination. We are more than ready to welcome you to our home. Come visit to witness, firsthand, the Philippine Experience," enthused TPB COO Nograles.

This year, more tourism stakeholders joined the Philippine delegation to reintroduce the country as a world-class tourism destination such as Airtrav Philippines, Araw Hospitality Inc., Amorita Resort, Annset Holidays, Inc., Baron Travel Corporation, Blue Horizons Travel & Tours Inc., Bohol Beach Club, Chroma Hospitality Inc. (Crimson Hotels & Resorts), Club Agutaya Inc., CTPH lifestyle & Travel Services, Divaishnavi International Inc., El Nido Resorts, Evasion Tropicale Travel and Tours, GI Philippines Corp., Intas Destination Management Inc., Marsman Drysdale Travel Inc., MyTRIPS Travel and Tours, Plantation Bay Resort and Spa, Rajah Tour Philippines, Sharp Travel Service, Sarah Lea Travel and Tours, The Funny Lion, Total Exhibit & Expo Solutions, Inc., Travelexperts, Inc., Travelite Travel and Tours Co., and the Philippine Retirement Authority.

Negros Occidental bags Green Story Destination Awards

Two Negros Occidental cities brought honor to the country

during the Green Destinations Awards at the ITB Berlin 2023 after being recognized for their inspirational sustainable tourism practices and efforts.

Sagay City bagged the People's Choice Award and ranked 2nd under Nature and Scenery Category with its entry, "Mangrove Forest Protection through Community-based EcoTourism Project". The city's Suyac Island Mangrove Ecopark, located inside the Sagay Marine Reserve, is the first fully community-based ecotourism site in Sagay, that offers an unparalleled experience and allows travelers to connect with nature and local culture.

Another pride of Negros Occidental, Bago City's entry "Reviving the Majestic Diversity of Bago Watershed" was awarded 3rd among the finalists under Environment and Climate Category. Bago City's Watershed plays a vital role in steering the wheel of the economy of Negros Occidental by supplying water to about 19,000 hectares of agricultural areas. To protect, conserve and rehabilitate the watershed, the city government mobilized its resources and strengthened community involvement through Integrated Ecosystem Management Approach (Ridge to Reef Environmental Management).

The prestigious Green Destinations Story Awards at the ITB Berlin showcases the most inspirational initiatives for sustainable tourism development from stories submitted to the yearly Green Destinations Top 100 Stories competition.

With the long-term goal of securing increased arrivals, receipts, and investments for the country, TPB annually participates in the ITB Berlin, which provides the Philippine travel trade an opportunity to network with relevant decision-makers from new and existing tourism markets across Europe, America, and Asia. **DOT**



Frasco meets with Central Europe tourism players

BERLIN, Germany - Philippine Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco met with major tourism stakeholders in central Europe to explore market opportunities in a bid to increase visitor arrivals from the region.

Some twenty tourism movers and players from Central Europe offered their invaluable insights and suggestions on topics ranging from connectivity, training, and marketing and promotions, as they met with the officials of the DOT on the sidelines of the ITB Berlin 2023 in Germany on March 8.

"We are aiming to invite more German nationals to our shores. After almost three years of setbacks and the global pandemic among the hosts of other calamities, we can finally say the worst is almost over, we flourished and we have survived and now the Philippines is thriving and ready for your partnership. Ready to receive all of you and the tourists that you would like to bring into our country," said Secretary Frasco in her address during the March 8 meeting.

The tourism chief noted that Germany is the Philippines' 11th biggest market for tourism in 2022.

According to DOT data, the Philippines in 2022 received a total of 39,013 visitors from Germany; 23,949 from France; 19,306 from The Netherlands; 11,092 from Switzerland; and 8,964 from Belgium.

The tourism chief also disclosed that based on the data of the Philippine Retirement Agency (PRA), an attached agency of the

DOT, Germany is the 9th biggest source market of the Philippines for retirees.

Secretary Frasco likewise apprised the participants during the dialogue of the plans and programs of the Department that will cater to the German market, including the Overwintering Program of the Department.

"And talking about this side of the world, as many of you know, while you are experiencing winter here, we are just about to declare the official start of summer in the Philippines. This is the best time to explore sun and beach destinations which we will make available for you through our overwintering program," said Secretary Frasco.

The DOT's report showed that the German visitor in the country stays an average of 14.50 nights when they visit the country, mostly for purposes of leisure and business.

Based on the same report, Cebu, Palawan, and Bohol are among the favorite destinations of German tourists.

"The French divers, they love the Philippines. What's amazing in the destination is the variety of what we can do and we want you to work more on that. The Philippines is more appealing today to the French market. thank you for having us here. It's really good, thank you for coming all the way from the Philippines to Europe. It counts a lot for us, it really means that you are invested in what you do," remarked Gerard Carnot, Managing Director of Ultramarina France. **(continue on page 7)**

Frasco meets with Central Europe tourism players

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Meanwhile, Arnould Devanley, Head of Agency Supply and Partnerships of Evaneos observed that there is a need for more tours guides who can speak more international languages, "I can say the Philippines is coming back," he noted.

Secretary Frasco assured the attendees that the tourism industry is a priority under the Marcos administration, particularly on the aspects of connectivity, human capital development, and peace and security.

"Our President is very serious in ensuring that the gains that have been made as far as peace and security are sustained. Soon, the Philippine Department of Tourism will be entering into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of National Defense (DND) and Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) for purposes of ensuring that the bedrock of our development of tourism is peace and security," Secretary Frasco explained.

"We are very optimistic as far as increasing flights; in the short term, it may not necessarily take you directly to the Philippines but at least it will provide more accessibility in terms of having a secondary connection to the Philippines. We also recognize the necessity of providing training to travel agents and the provision of e-training platforms is definitely one we would take with serious consideration at the soonest possible time so we would be able to provide all the necessary information that your markets are interested in. As far as our people on the ground in the Philippines are concerned, we are continuing to train and that we are trying to reach the 100,000 number to ensure that the quality of service further improves," she further assured the stakeholders present.

Among the other participants of the listening tour with Secretary Frasco in Central Europe are FTI Touristik, Diamir, Tischler Reisen, TravelTrend, Shoestring, Koning Aap, Avila Reizen, TravelTrend, PANGEA Travel, The Travel Club, Interface Tourism, Worldia, FTI Switzerland, Vögele Reisen, DER Touristik, Travelhouse, Asia365, and Tour Asia.

Meeting with German Tourism officials

Maximizing her attendance to the ITB Berlin, Secretary Frasco also met with Coordinator for the Maritime Industry and Tourism under the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Change, His Excellency Dieter Janecek on March 9.

The tourism officials discussed the necessity of enhancing connectivity between the Philippines and Germany, and tackled possible areas of collaboration with regard joint promotions to strengthen the Philippine presence in the German market, as well as best sustainable tourism practices that may be ventured in by both countries.

The DOT conveyed its interest to initiate German language trainings for tourism front liners, particularly tour guides, in a bid to further develop the tourism product portfolio offered to the German tourists.

The meeting was also attended by Consul Mary Luck Hicarte of the Embassy of the Philippines in Germany; Tourism Promotions Board Philippines COO Margarita Montemayor Nograles; and DOT Officials, Undersecretary Shahlimar Hofer Tamano, OIC-Undersecretary Verna Buensuceso, and Assistant Secretary Rica Bueno. **DOT**



DOT brings Bisita, Be My Guest caravan to Berlin

BERLIN - The Department of Tourism (DOT) gathered the Filipino community in Germany to a celebration of the Filipino gastronomy, heritage, and culture, to inspire them to become tourism ambassadors of the Philippines through the Department's Bisita, Be My Guest Program.

Some 350 participants comprised of overseas Filipinos, Overseas Filipino workers, officials of the diplomatic corps in Germany, the media, and delegates of the ITB 2023 attended the launch of the Bisita, Be My Guest program at the Bristol Hotel in Berlin on March 9.

Banjo Cristobal who hails from Malabon, has been working in Germany as a nurse since 2019. He took a three-hour train ride just to participate in the event. The DOT's Bisita, Be My Guest program, he shared, inspired him to travel back home.

"Masaya ako kasi nag-gather ang mga Filipino dito sa Germany, hindi sya madalas mangyari. Namimiss ko yung Philippines, dito kasi laging malamig, maulan. Doon namimiss ko ang dagat, 'yung init, yung pagkain, syempre yung family. Nakatulong ang DOT para mabigyang sigla ulit ang turismo kasi ang layo naming sa Pilipinas, hindi sobrang daling umuwi. I have a partner and he will be my guest! Itong program na double win siya para sa akin," said Cristobal, who is also the lucky winner of the roundtrip business class tickets from Eva Air raffled off during the event.

"I'm happy to be here. Tourism is a large component of the economy and this program is a beautiful way to bring the beauty of Philippines to the world. I try to be a good ambassador to bring people around the world to the Philippines," said 23-year-old half-Filipino and half-German Kathrin Mkuehl, who was born and raised in Germany. Mkuehl won the USD 1,000 cash prize from the personal account of House Deputy Speaker Duke Frasco.

Meanwhile, also present during the program launch is Michel Kranendonk product manager of Travel trend-The Netherlands. "I think it's quite an interesting way of involving the people, the own country people to promote the country. It's a good idea to make people more aware of the Philippines, and come to visit them," he said.

The Bisita, Be My Guest is the flagship program of Secretary Frasco implemented by the DOT, together with its tourism promotions arm, the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines, in partnership with the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW).

It is an innovative online referral program aimed at boosting the Philippine economy through increasing tourist arrivals, while at the same time giving incentives, privileges, and prizes such as a condominium unit from the Megaworld Corporation and travel packages from the Philippine Airlines, Cebu Pacific, and partner hotels such as Nay Palad of Siargao to Filipinos who will serve as "sponsors" for their foreign friends and guests.

"Mga kababayan alam po natin kung gaano kalaki ang inyong kontribusyon at sakripisyo para sa ating ekonomiya sa Pilipinas. We greatly appreciate all of the contributions and sacrifices of our overseas Filipinos and Overseas Filipino workers that have helped many Filipinos back home. Priority po ng ating President ang turismo kaya po excited kami na i-welcome kayo at ang inyong mga bisita sa Pilipinas because we have come up with this program specifically for overseas Filipinos, and OFWs, to entice you to become tourism ambassadors of the Philippines!" said Secretary Frasco as she addressed the cheerful crowd.

"The Philippines is a country like no other and we are blessed with a host of natural destinations, we are blessed with the warmth and grace of the Filipino. It's our time Pilipinas!" exclaimed the tourism chief.

The program has three components: (1.) the BBMG Raffle (2.) the BBMG Travel Passport, and (3.) the BBMG Privilege Card. It will have three major draws which will happen on May 11, 2023, December 15, 2023, and May 10, 2024.

"I'm very happy and excited, of course. I'm very proud of the Philippines and I love my country. Of course, I will be joining the program. I always recommend to my friends all over here in Germany that Philippines is nice, beautiful, very friendly (Filipinos), and if possible, try to go there," enthused Cherry Enrich, a Filipino now living in Germany.

Attendees from the Filipino community also received big prizes from the Bisita, Be My Guest program's generous sponsors, including roundtrip tickets from China Airlines, and travel packages from Sarah Leah Travel and Tours and Evasion Tropicale, as well as accommodation stays at the country's prime properties in major tourist destinations Lihim Resorts, Club Agutaya, Crimson Hotel, and Marsmann Drysdale.

To know more about the Bisita, Be My Guest program, visit www.bbmng.philippines.travel. **DOT**



Philippines hits 271M negotiated sales, bags recognition at the ITB Berlin 2023

By: Department of Tourism and Tourism Promotions Board

Buoyed by the country's participation in the recently concluded Internationale Tourismus-Börse (ITB) in Berlin, the Department of Tourism (DOT) and its attached agency, the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines, as of this writing, recorded an impressive estimate of Php 271 million worth of negotiated sales from more than 300 business meetings during the 3-day networking event.

The aforementioned figures show the Philippines' strong demand in the world's largest travel and tourism trade fair, further brightening the prospects for the local tourism industry's recovery and for the country's positioning as a tourism powerhouse in Asia.

"We brought the biggest Philippine delegation to the ITB Berlin 2023 with the intention of showcasing the best of the best of our country and our culture, and to reintroduce to the world our greatest asset: the warmth and hospitality of the Filipino people. The optimism and excitement with which all of this was received shows the world that the possibilities are endless for the potential of Philippine tourism to transform under the Marcos administration," said Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco.

The Philippine delegation included tour operators, online travel agencies, travel websites and communities with 26 co-exhibitors, showcasing the country's natural beauty and rich culture to over 160,000 guests.

TPB COO Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles cited that the positive outcome of the Philippines' participation in ITB Berlin strengthened the country's position to be a world-class tourist destination. *"We are proud to bear witness once again at how ITB continues to live up to its reputation for being the largest travel trade show in the world. I am so happy to share that the Philippines truly championed in giving the world a view into our distinct and diverse destinations, culture and heritage in this momentous event,"* TPB COO Nograles added.

Further bringing home accolades, the two cities in Negros Occidental, Sagay and Bago won in the Green Destination Story Awards for its inspirational initiatives for sustainable tourism. With its entry, "Mangrove Forest Protection through Community-based EcoTourism Project", Sagay placed second in the Nature and Scenery Category and won the People's Choice Award while Bago City's entry, "Reviving the Majestic Diversity of Bago Watershed" took the third spot in the Environment and Climate Category.

The event highlighted the Philippines rich culture and sustainable tourism with its weavers' hand-loom products which are passed down from generations to generations to preserve its tradition and heritage including the Tinalak of South Cotabato and Yakan of Zamboanga. Aside from that, Kape de Filipina's coffee and chocolates and Ayan's delicious Filipino cuisine were also served to delight the guests.

ITB Berlin News, the show's official daily, has partnered with Click A Tree for its sustainability partner. Chris Kaiser, award-winning speaker, entrepreneur and founder of Click A Tree, has selected the Philippines to be the site of its tree planting project for this year's cause. The site will be in Davao Oriental, Mindanao. Kaiser will be visiting the Philippines in September for the tree planting initiative.

With the long-term goal of securing increased arrivals, receipts, and investments for the country, TPB annually participates in ITB Berlin, which provides the Philippine travel trade an opportunity to network with relevant decision-makers from new and existing tourism markets across Europe, America, and Asia. **DOT**





DOT leads Philippine visa reforms convergence

MAKATI, Philippines - In anticipation of the surge of foreign tourists coming into the Philippines this summer season and following President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr.'s directive for the implementation of electronic visa systems, the Department of Tourism (DOT) led by Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco initiated a high-level convergence meeting with the heads and representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), Department of Justice (DOJ), Bureau of Immigration (BI) to discuss visa reforms primarily to ease entry for country's tourist source markets.

The event is the continuation of the discussions initiated by the Department of Tourism since September 2022 with concerned agencies to take up visa concerns for key and strategic tourism markets in the hope of finding solutions affecting the flow of entry of international tourists.

Addressing the tourism bottlenecks

While the Secretary has recognized the tourism achievements made last year even when the Philippines concluded 2022 with 2.65 million international tourist arrivals and surpassing the targeted 1.7 million figures, she emphasized that there are still bottlenecks seen which prevents the country from fully unlocking the potential of international tourism into the country.

"For this reason, our President issued the directive to various government agencies to explore how the bottlenecks to travel into the country may be addressed and specifically, he indicated that one of the ways by which travel into the Philippines may be fully opened up especially to certain important markets, we must explore the provision of electronic visas (e-visa)," she said, citing as well the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. that government agencies must explore the provision of e-visas to Chinese and Indian nationals, among others.

Economic potential of the Indian tourist market

Emphasizing the importance of the Indian tourist market,

the DOT noted that 58 percent of the total Indian visitors are repeat travelers, thus the need to continue the efforts to sustain and increase their entry by exploring travel mechanisms, primarily an e-visa system, that would make travel seamless.

India, the DOT noted, has risen from being an opportunity market for the Philippines to an important market source of foreign visitors.

"We are the only country that presently does not provide the convenient electronic visa for Indian nationals. This is a huge market that the Philippines has yet to explore," explained the tourism chief.

With this, Indian Ambassador to the Philippines H.E. Shambhu S. Kumaran responded: *"Perhaps Indian travelers traveling to ASEAN could potentially be looking at a new destination. So, in many ways, both in terms of the dynamic bilateral relationship, but also in terms of the larger trends in India, I think the timing is very opportune for the Philippines to be doing something to reach out to India travelers, and this, I'm sure, will lead to a very dramatic breakthrough in terms of how our nationals will travel,"* the ambassador added with optimism.

China as the Philippines' top tourist market

In 2019, China was the country's second largest source of inbound tourists, producing more than 1.7 million arrivals and translated to P2.33 billion in tourism receipts.

"In 2019, it may be noted that our Philippine foreign posts in China were able to process over 1.5 million visas for the Chinese market ranging from an average daily number per post of 508 up to as high as 2,704 visas per day. However, it has been brought forth to us by the various airlines that have approached us that the Philippine consular posts in China has issued visa application advisories limiting the acceptance of visa applications per day from only around 60 to 100," Secretary Frasco said during the high-level meeting.

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DOT leads Philippine visa reforms convergence

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"Of our low target of half a million Chinese coming into the Philippines, we would need to issue 1,704 visas per day. If we are to target the medium scenario of a million Chinese into the country then we would need to issue 3,409 visas per day. If we are to target two million Chinese coming to the Philippines and which is the desired target of the Department of Tourism, then we would need to issue 6,818 visas per day for a total of 1.8 million visas in a year, which is not too far off from the 1.5 million issued in 2019," Frasco emphasized.

According to the Worldometer of the United Nations, China currently has a population of over 1.4 billion. The sizable population translates to massive opportunity for the Philippines especially considering that according to 2019 data, China provided the largest number of outbound tourists all over the world at 160 million Chinese citizens traveling to various countries.

Citing global data, the tourism chief said: "Chinese outbound tourism will surpass 2019 levels by 2024 and therefore, time is of the essence for the Philippines to ensure that the ease with which Chinese citizens can come into the Philippines can be approved."

"With the projected number of visas to be issued due to the quotas presently imposed, revenue losses are anticipated, and we stand to lose over 2.51 Billion Dollars in revenues if the difficulties in obtaining visas is not immediately addressed. Airlines and charter operators have already approached us expressing grave concern of the present limitations. According to them, they may not be able to increase the flight frequencies that they are very much prepared to resume due to low passenger numbers and airfares and travel packages may become too expensive and therefore, not competitive," she added.

Simplification of education and tourism cruise requirements

The DOT also recommended the simplification of process requirements for Waiver of Exclusion Ground (WEG) and exemption of qualified students to apply for Special Study Permit (SSP) for the English as a Second Language (ESL) industry.

Also, with the resurgence of cruise tourism in the country, the DOT noted the need for, DFA, DOJ, and BI, as signatories of the Joint Memorandum Circular for Cruise Ship Landing Permit, to revisit the draft and make final inputs for finalization, as well as the digitalization of the platform and making it an e-Landing Permit.

Concerned officials vowed to look into the matter and expressed their support for the proposed reforms on the country's special markets, citing, at the same time, the need to "balance legal requirements," in accordance with the law.

In 2019, Austria-based research market specialist Bonard has identified the Philippines as the fifth largest ESL provider in the world, with around 70 percent of the whole ESL industry in the country based on the island province of Cebu which caters to students from Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, China, as well as emerging markets Mongolia, Thailand, West Asia, and Russia.

Further, the country is also anticipating 139 ports of call for cruise tourism with over 117,000 passengers pegged for 2023 alone.

Commitment of support

As a commitment of support, the DICT and the DFA vowed to closely work to further the resurgence of the country's tourism by acting on the matters addressed.

"The DICT will definitely put it as one of our priorities to support the Department of Tourism and the Department of Foreign Affairs," DICT Secretary Ivan John Uy also committed the Department's support.

"I have taken note of all your recommendations. Rest assured that we will build this and we will give you immediate feedback. We are one with you in this," DFA Assistant Secretary Henry S. Bensurto, Jr. said, citing that the cap imposed on visa issuance for the incoming Chinese tourists is a policy amid the surge of COVID-19 cases that time.

"The results of our discussions today will determine whether or not we will be able to recover as well and as fast as we should considering the potential of our destinations to transform the Philippines into the tourism powerhouse that it can and should be. Therefore, I would like to express my deep gratitude to all the government agencies and the heads of agencies that joined us today. We are very hopeful that the results of our discussions today would result in immediate results for the implementation of the e-visa system and the easing of the other factors that were discussed," the Secretary concluded.

Other attendees of the convergence meeting were DOJ Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla and Undersecretaries Brigido Dulay and Jose Cadiz, Jr., Assistant Secretary Jose Dominic Clavano IV; DICT Undersecretary David Almirol, Jr.; Presidential Management Staff Assistant Secretary Montano T. Nazario, Jr.; BI Commissioner Norman Tansingco; DFA Executive Director Christian De Jesus and Director Leilano Feliciano; DOT Undersecretary Shahlimar Hofer Tamano, OIC-Undersecretary Verna Buensuceso, Assistant Secretary Ma. Rica Bueno, OIC-Assistant Secretary Warner Andrada, and Tourism Attache Rene Reyes. **DOT**





DOT chief unveils National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) 2023-2028 at stakeholders' summit

(continued from page 1)

MANILA, Philippines - Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco on March 15 formally unveiled the completed National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) 2023 to 2028 at the Tourism Stakeholders' National Summit organized by the Department of Tourism (DOT).

Speaking before some 350 attendees from the national government agencies, local government units (LGUs), associations and organizations from the tourism sectors who filled the venue hall of the Sheraton Manila Bay, Secretary Frasco presented the salient points of the NTDP 2023-2028, a draft of which was first previewed during the Tourism Coordinating Council (TCC) meeting that the tourism chief convened last month.

"This NTDP will serve as a blueprint for the strategies on how the Department of Tourism intends to continue and to grow the impact of tourism upon our economy in the next few years. This will be the guidebook of the industry where we put in place mechanisms for sustainability for many many years to come," Secretary Frasco said.

Aside from sustainability, the NTDP will also serve as the guide towards a tourism industry that is innovative, inclusive, and globally competitive, according to Frasco.

"Under the leadership of President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos, Jr. we have been called upon to transform the Philippine [tourism industry] into a tourism powerhouse in Asia. With your partnership, collaboration, and your unwavering support, I can say that we have begun the work of transforming the industry and giving the Philippines a more significant role in the ASEAN and in the world," she added.

Transforming the Philippines into a tourism powerhouse

Heeding the President's call and under the NTDP 2023-2028, the DOT shall endeavor to "Establish a Philippine tourism industry anchored on Filipino culture, heritage, and identity, which aims to be sustainable, resilient, and competitive in order to transform the Philippines into a tourism powerhouse in Asia."

The Plan formalizes the specific strategies to be pursued under the main objectives and strategies that were earlier laid out by the DOT under the leadership of Secretary Frasco, and anchors on the strategic values of Philippine Identity, Sustainability, Resilience, and Global Competitiveness.

To recall, Secretary Frasco early into

her assumption of office and upon close consultation and coordination with Philippine tourism stakeholders identified the following seven main objectives of the NTDP: 1. Improvement of Tourism Infrastructure and Accessibility; 2. Cohesive and Comprehensive Digitalization and Connectivity; 3. Enhancement of the Overall Tourist Experience; 4. Equalization of Tourism Product Development and Promotion; 5. Diversification of the Tourism Portfolio through Multidimensional Tourism; 6. Maximization of Domestic and International Tourism; and 7. Strengthening Tourism Governance through Close Collaborations with National and Local Stakeholders.

Positive trajectory for Philippine tourism

Secretary Frasco noted that, even prior to the finalization of the tourism blueprint for the next five years, the DOT has closely collaborated with tourism stakeholders in carrying out the President's vision through its various plans and programs, citing the most recent international accolades and nominations received by the Philippines and its tourism destinations, as well as the positive tourism figures seen last year as a manifestation of the significant headway that the tourism industry obtained under the Marcos administration.

The tourism chief reported 2022 to be a fruitful year for the Philippine tourism industry, underscoring that last year's international arrivals reached 2.65 million, exceeding the initial target of 1.7 million foreign visitors. This figure, she noted, translated to Php 214 billion or roughly US\$ 4 Billion in estimated revenues, thereby boosting the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the post-pandemic era and exceeding the targeted revenue of Php155.03 billion by 38.06 percent.

High hopes maintained amid challenges

While she acknowledged some existing challenges including the country's ranking in the World Economic Forum 2021 Travel and Tourism Development Index, which went down two places from its 2019 ranking, Secretary Frasco expressed the DOT's determination and optimism on achieving the targets laid out in the NTDP 2023-2028, among which is the target of 4.8 million international arrivals and attainment of pre-pandemic (2019) domestic tourism levels this year.

(continue on page 13)

DOT chief unveils National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) 2023-2028 at stakeholders' summit

(continued from page 12)

"The momentum for recovery and growth has begun. We've eased restrictions. We've continued to aggressively promote our destinations through the DOT's constant and unyielding presence in various exhibits in the Philippines and all over the world. And people are traveling now, and are traveling with a vengeance. By promoting the Philippines through the biggest international tourism and trade fairs across Asia and Europe, we are re-introducing the Philippines to the world, and bringing no less than the best of the best of the country and the Filipino people," the tourism chief enthused.

"The Philippines already is a global destination upon the strength of our islands and beaches, our diving and biodiversity, and our hospitality as a people. Our future growth hinges on investments in meeting and conventions, health and wellness, lifestyle and entertainment, as well as domestic and international cruising. But most importantly, becoming a truly global destination demands that we provide an authentic Filipino experience for our visitors – creating distinctly Filipino experiences through our food and farms, our fashion and festivals, our arts and crafts, our traditions and practices, and the Filipino brand of service," she added.

In closing her comprehensive presentation of the DOT's plans and programs enclosed in the NTDP 2023-2028, Secretary Frasco once again enlisted the support of the stakeholders present.

"With your partnership, your collaboration, and your belief—your continued belief—in the strength of the tourism industry, we are confident that not only will we be able to accomplish the recovery for this much-battered industry, but more importantly, accomplish a true transformation of the tourism industry that will allow the Philippines to take a primary role in the ASEAN and the world as a tourism powerhouse in Asia, because the Filipino people deserve nothing less," enthused Secretary Frasco, who noted the DOT's readiness to roll out the completed NTDP 2023-2028 once President Marcos Jr. approves the Plan.

Stakeholders' full show of support

Aside from officials of the DOT Central and Regional Offices, also present at the Tourism Stakeholders' National Summit in a show of support to Philippine tourism are leaders and representatives from national and local government agencies, including the Department of Finance (DOF), Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), Senate Economic Planning Office, League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP), Maritime Industry Authority - Philippines, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) - Ministry of Trade Investments and Tourism, and the National Museum of the Philippines (NMP).

Quirino Governor Dakila Carlo E. Cua, who serves as the President of the Union of Local Authorities in the Philippines (ULAP), extended the union's support to the DOT *"in its efforts to promote sustainable tourism practices and create a better future for the Filipino people"*, and regarded the Summit as a *"great platform to learn about the*



National Tourism Development Plan of the country and how local governments can and should contribute to the realization of this plan."

"Local governments play a critical role in promoting and developing tourism. By leading government efforts, local governments can ensure that tourism is sustainable, benefits the local community and contributes to the economic development of the area. We need to promote tourism that is respectful of local culture and traditions, protects the environment, and supports the local economy. We must encourage travelers to engage in sustainable practices such as supporting local businesses and reducing their environmental impact," enthused the Governor.

Also at the event is House Committee on Tourism Chairperson Representative Eleandro Jesus F. Madrona, who also delivered a message of support to the DOT and the NTDP 2023-2028.

"The Department of Tourism has done, and is continuing to do a very commendable job in uplifting the country's tourism industry side by side with its partners in government, the private sector representatives from the different industry groups and other tourism stakeholders," he said.

"Today's event speaks for itself. Sa totoo po, pagpasok ko kanina, nakita ko punong-puno itong ating venue. That means to say marami po talaga ang nakiki-isa sa ating drive to develop tourism. The holding of this National Summit is a testimony to the fact that the DOT is not resting on its laurels, and we would like to assure you that the outputs, ideas, and recommendations in the National Tourism Development Plan will be used by the House of Representatives as the perfect springboard in generating tourism legislations which are far deeper and productive to the industry," he added.

Madrona further announced that the House Committee on Tourism has filed a resolution to commend the DOT under the leadership of Secretary Frasco *"for its exemplary performance in ushering the resurgence of the Philippine tourism industry."* He also noted that since the beginning of this Congress, over 100 tourism-related bills have been passed on third reading. Furthermore, the Representative shared that the Congress is also currently reviewing the Republic Act (RA) Tourism Act of 2009 to give the DOT ample power *"to be on top of the funding for tourism industries."*

"We have already felt that DOT as it is currently chartered, needs more teeth for us to be able to really affect our [visions of tourism] industry in our places," Madrona said.

Also represented at the Summit are various tourism groups, including Council of Hotel and Restaurant Educators of the Philippines, Heritage Conservation Society, Hotel Sales and Marketing Association (HSMA) International Inc., National Association of Independent Travel Agencies, Philippine Hotel Owners Association (PHOA), and UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines, among others. **DOT**

Frasco lauds MICECON 2023

Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco addresses participants, speakers, and tourism stakeholders of the Philippine MICE Conference (MICECon) 2023 during the event's closing ceremonies on March 3 afternoon at the SMX Convention Center in SM Lanang Premier, Davao City.

Lauding the huge turnout at the three-day event organized by the Department of Tourism (DOT) through the Tourism Promotions Board Philippines (TPB) together with the City Government of Davao, Secretary Frasco said that the successful staging of the MICECon 2023 in Davao greatly contributes to the efforts of the Department of Tourism (DOT) in positioning the Philippines as a preferred destination for meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (M.I.C.E.).

"We have seen through this successful MICECON 2023 that the meetings, incentive travels, exhibitions and conventions can serve as another avenue for us to reinvigorate and revitalize the tourism industry. For 2023, Davao has shown us the way, it has become a model for others to follow, and a springboard from which we can launch an even more exciting MICECON in the future. And we will. From here, with all of you onboard, together, it will not be impossible for the Philippines to be the best MICE destination in Asia," Secretary Frasco said.

Considered as the largest gathering of MICE professionals in the country, MICECon returned to Davao City after ten years since the city's first hosting of the conference in 2013.

Bannering the theme "MICEConverge: Blaze New Trails," the hybrid conference invited some 500 in-person delegates and nearly 1,000 online participants to participate in exciting components including the MICE Youth Challenge, Power Dressing and Glam Makeup Sessions and Workshops where Davao's finest tourism and product services will be on full display with the sub-themes, "Celebrating Nature", "Celebrating Diversity" and "Celebrating Travel and Technology".

At the Farewell Dinner culminating the MICECon 2023 in Davao on March 3, Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco congratulated organizers of the successful three-day conference.



In particular, the Tourism Chief lauded the City Government of Davao led by Mayor Sebastian Duterte and the Davao MICE 2023 Organizing Committee, saying that the city raised the bar for hosting MICECon 2023 and "having held such an excellent exhibition of the potential that the Philippines can have to be the leading MICE destination in Asia."

"This giant leap forward cannot be done had it not been for the hardwork of everyone responsible for MICECon 2023," Secretary Frasco enthused.

The Tourism Chief also commended the City Government of Davao and stakeholders for their strides to institutionalize MICE, which included the passage of an ordinance that will ensure the promotion of the MICE sector through the local government unit's (LGU) close partnership with private stakeholders, noting that this effort began when Davao placed a bid for MICECon 2023 under the leadership of its former Mayor, and now Vice President of the Republic of the Philippines Sara Duterte.

Looking ahead to the next edition of the conference, Secretary Frasco revealed Clark, Pampanga as the host of MICECon 2024. Similar to Davao where the previous MICECon was held a decade ago, Clark last served as conference host in 2014.

"In the last ten years, Clark has transformed itself into a metropolitan area that is a host to one of our international gateways and that is the Clark International Airport. And it is now very active in ensuring that countryside development benefits our fellow Filipinos in Northern Luzon," Secretary Frasco said.

"Cheers to Davao's excellent hosting of Micecon 2023 in Davao, and here's to looking forward to Clark for 2024," the Tourism Chief closed.

Aside from Secretary Frasco, gracing the event are no less than Vice President Duterte, Congresswoman Atty. Margarita "Migs" Nograles, Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Undersecretary Marge Gutierrez, Tourism Promotions Board (COO) Marga Nograles, DOT Undersecretary Ferdinand Jumapao, DOT-11 Regional Director Tanya Rabat-Tan, and Clark Development Corporation (CDC) President Atty. Agnes Devanadera. **DOT**

DOT supports 1st International Ecotourism Travel Mart

Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco joins Department of Transportation (DOTr) Secretary Jaime Bautista, former Tourism Secretary and now International School for Sustainable Tourism (ISST) President Mina Gabor, and dignitaries and delegates at the opening festivities of the International Ecotourism Travel Mart (IETM) 2023 at the Yen Center for International Institute of Rural Reconstruction in Silang, Cavite on March 29.

Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco underscored the commitment of the Department of Tourism (DOT) to pursue sustainable tourism development.

“Under the Marcos administration we have begun the work of ensuring that sustainable tourism lies at the very heart of the tourism transformation of the Philippines. As the lead coordinator for environment and climate change in the ASEAN national tourism organizations the Department of Tourism continues to ensure that sustainability is at the forefront of tourism development,” said Secretary Frasco in her keynote address.

“In the Department of Tourism, we realize that tourism can no longer just be about the numbers or quantity but rather quality, and that is why events such as this that highlights the importance of sustainability are a gift not only to the Philippines but to the world. You are the champions of sustainability that will ensure the longevity of tourism, of all of our countries,” the tourism chief added.

Department of Tourism (DOT) OIC Undersecretary for Tourism Development Planning Verna Buensuceso presented the current Philippine ecotourism situation, highlighting the historical steps taken by the Department towards sustainable tourism since the 1990s on the second day of the International Ecotourism Travel Mart (IETM) 2023.

OIC-Undersecretary Buensuceso stated that the Philippines has been at the forefront of ecotourism development, implementing various policies and strategies such as the 20-year sustainable tourism master plan, the 1987 Constitution, the DOT-DENR Joint Memorandum Circular on ecotourism framework development, Executive Order 111 on the ecotourism development national policy, the Tourism Act 2009, and the National Ecotourism Strategy and Action Plan, in a bid to balance sustainable tourism development, environmental conservation, and cultural preservation.

Visitors can discover a variety of locally-made products and services, including indigenous textiles, coffee, and delicious delicacies, brought together by the DOT's Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, The Cordilleras, MIMAROPA, Bicol, Western Visayas, Central Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, Davao, and SOCCSKSARGEN (SOX) Regional Offices.

The third day of the IETM 2023, the world's first green travel mart and selling fair, continued to showcase products and services that banner ecotourism, green technology, and sustainable green practices.

The travel mart exhibition also features booths of DOT attached agencies such as Philippine Retirement Authority (PRA) and Tourism Infrastructure Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), as well as local government units (LGU), travel and tour operators, airlines, hotels, theme parks, foreign exhibitors, and sustainable product enterprises.

An Indigenous People's Village featuring cultures from different countries, a bustling marketplace, a One Town One Product (OTOP) Pavilion, and an eco-lodge display are among the outdoor features of the IETM 2023. **DOT**



DOT, DOH to ease up guidelines on parks and public open spaces

Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco and Department of Health (DOH) OIC Secretary Rosario Vergeire, on March 1, tackled some provisions of the Joint Administrative Order (JAO) on Healthy Public and Open Spaces proposed by the DOH. The JAO provided provisions imposing prohibitions on the use of parks and open spaces, including the prohibition on tour guides gathering clusters of tour groups and prohibitions on the rental of personal equipment with oral exposure (such as dive equipment), to which Secretary Frasco interposed objection.

Sec. Frasco underscored the Department's principal policy direction set by the Marcos administration over the liberal use of public open spaces such as parks underscoring "the need to avoid unnecessary restrictions placed on travel sites and other public open spaces."

Emphasizing that managing these spaces should be done with a post-pandemic perspective, Frasco added that *"Public open spaces are tourist destinations. Conveying that there is some limitation on the capacity of these spaces contravenes the Marcos Administration's efforts to convey openness to tourists vis-a-vis ASEAN and global counterparts."*

Secretary Frasco also fleshed out specific provisions initially proposed by the DOH that are inimical to the current direction of the Marcos Administration that empowers the DOT and the tourism industry to contribute to the country's recovery and economic resurgence.

The meeting concluded in an agreement of the adoption of the current government's policy to convey to the world, "easing out of the pandemic state into the endemic state."

This, without compromising the public health safety of the people, while enjoying tourist destinations like public open spaces.

Titled "Guidelines on the Creation, Use, and Management of Parks and Public Open Spaces for the Promotion of Physical and Mental Health and Well-Being During and Beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic," the JAO is aimed at establishing standards, managing public open spaces, and ensuring it is safe and appropriate for the people's use.

Also present in the meeting are DOT officials: OIC Usec. Verna Buensucos, Director Paulo Tugbang, Director Annave Lapitan and DOH officials: Assistant Secretary Beverly Lorraine Ho and Health Promotion Bureau Director Rodley Desmond Daniel Carza. **DOT**





DOT-DOLE Tourism Job Fairs offer more than 8K jobs

The Department of Tourism (DOT) in collaboration with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has successfully completed the second leg of the Trabaho, Turismo, Asenso, the national Philippine Tourism Job fair launched under the Marcos administration which is the first of its kind in the industry.

According to Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco, the job fairs offered more than 8,185 tourism employment in Central Luzon, Western Visayas, and Northern Mindanao.

Secretary Frasco has earlier said that the Department will undertake a holistic approach to tourism going beyond mere promotions to inclusive growth through jobs, and product development to help the Philippine economy recover from the lingering effects of the pandemic.

"In line with the pronouncement of President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. for the tourism industry to become an engine of employment generation, the Department of Tourism will continue to empower our tourism workforce by giving them access to jobs that will match their skills," said Secretary Frasco.

"Such is the innate characteristic of the tourism industry, its multiplier effect across various sectors can support job creation which is exactly what we wish to achieve as we eye to exceed our targets for this year. The more visitors we have, the more jobs we will create for

our fellow Filipinos," the tourism chief added.

The DOT-DOLE job fair is a collaboration between the Departments that was formalized through a Memorandum of Agreement between Secretary Frasco and Secretary Bienvenido Laguesma last August 2022.

Overall, the series of DOT-DOLE job fairs have offered a combined 16,485 employment opportunities to job seekers.

Regions 3, 6, and 10 conducted separate job fairs in their respective areas to help bring tourism livelihood to the regions with Central Luzon conducting their job fair at Robinsons Starmills in San Fernando, Pampanga, Western Visayas at Robinsons Jaro in Iloilo City, and Northern Mindanao at Limketkai Mall in Cagayan de Oro.

With the Philippines exceeding its benchmark target by one million last year to 2.65 million arrivals, the job fair, Frasco noted, is also seen to boost the economy by meeting the demands of employers following the influx of travelers brought by "revenge travel" caused by more than three years of closed borders.

As of April 5, the DOT has already recorded 1,465,253 arrivals with the bulk of visitors coming from S. Korea with 369,354, followed by the US with 263,596, and Canada with 73,079 arrivals. The benchmark target for 2023 is 4.8 million arrivals. **DOT**

Promotions of DOT accreditation among LGUs strengthened at Philippine Councilors League (PCL) convention

By: DOT-Office of Tourism Standards and Regulation

The Department of Tourism (DOT), through its Office of Tourism Standards and Regulations (OTSR), presented the Department's mandate and regulatory functions before members of the Philippine Councilors League (PCL) during the 2023 National Convention held at the World Trade Center in Pasay City last March 9, 2023.

"The participation of DOT-OTSR in the recently concluded PCL National Convention demonstrates the commitment of the Department under the leadership of Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco to build stronger alliances with local government units (LGUs), realizing their crucial role in mainstreaming DOT accreditation at the local government level and uplifting the quality of tourism across the country," said DOT-OTSR Director Virgilio M. Maguigad.

The PCL is the biggest among local government associations, with over 17,000 members comprised of city and municipal councilors from all over the country. It stands at the forefront of contemporary and emerging trends in local administration and development to help improve the quality of life of all Filipinos through effective local legislation.

During the event, Director Maguigad discussed the shared responsibilities of the DOT and the LGUs in the implementation of accreditation for Primary Tourism Enterprises, encouraging PCL members—especially members who chair the Committee on



Tourism in their respective councils—to include DOT accreditation as one of the requirements in renewing business permits through the issuance of Local Ordinance on mandatory accreditation of Primary Tourism Enterprises.

On top of its participation in the PCL National Convention, the DOT-OTSR initiates activities with different local government units (LGUs) as part of its program to promote tourism quality and DOT accreditation. Among these is the conduct of regular capacity building seminars on tourism quality, targeting participants from the Business Permit and Licensing Office (BPLO), Engineering, Fire Management Bureau, and other offices involved in the local government's issuance of business permits.

The DOT-OTSR is also in close collaboration with the Philippine Association of Building Officials (PABO) to explore ways to include the DOT's physical requirements in the building plans of accommodation establishments applying for business permits.

The DOT has recently announced that its Online Accreditation System will undergo scheduled maintenance from April 6, 2023, at 12:00 AM, to April 9, 2023, at 11:59 PM. During this period, the system will be temporarily unavailable. **DOT**

Business as usual in Puerto Galera; DOT to train tourism workers affected by oil spill for alternative livelihood- Frasco

Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco on March 27 said that affected frontline tourism workers will be subjected to capacity building and skills training programs in a bid to prepare and provide them with alternative sources of livelihood following the oil spill incident in Mindoro.

"At this point, it's really about ensuring that our tourism frontline workers na kung mawalan man sila ng work for a few days or weeks because of the oil spill that we are able to provide them with alternative sources of livelihood and that is why we will be providing trainings to them, not just specifically focused on their present work but to alternative types of work," the tourism chief said during her television guesting at Teleradyo's morning show Sakto, Monday.

The training, she added, will be conducted by the Department's regional offices.

Frasco also shared that she has already directed the Department's regional offices, through 4B (MIMAROPA) and 6 (Western Visayas), to consolidate all of the names of the affected tourism workers and have them endorsed to the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) to avail of the assistance under the Tulong PanghanapBuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD) program.

"Per our monitoring, umabot na sa 63 tourism sites yung affected ng oil spill and up to 1,000 tourism workers. Kasali na din dito 'yung ating community-based tourism. And so, we are monitoring this very closely and I've already directed the regional offices to craft a recovery action plan para naman po mabigyan natin ng guidance 'yung ating

mga affected tourism stakeholders and we are sure to provide social protection sa ating mga affected tourism workers," she emphasized.

Likewise, the DOT, through its Office of Industry and Manpower Development (OIMD), will also conduct a learning needs assessment to develop a training module on oil spill to better equip tourism stakeholders in case similar incidents happen in the future.

Earlier, the municipal government of Puerto Galera has clarified that the area remains negative of the oil spill effects, thus, the tourism chief said that the tourist destination remains one hundred percent open for tourism.

"As far as the top attractions in that particular area, including Puerto Galera were pleased to inform the public that they are still at over 90 percent capacity as far as reservation is concerned, we invite our fellow Filipinos to patronize Puerto Galera kasi patuloy po ang kanilang tourism offerings, while at the same time, we will continue to give whatever assistance that we can do to the areas that have been affected," she said.

According to the March 22, 2023 report by the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC), the following cities and municipalities in CALABARZON, MIMAROPA, and Western Visayas, have been confirmed of the oil spill from the sunken MT Princess Empress off Naujan, Oriental Mindoro: Batangas City in Batangas; Naujan, Pola, Pinamalayan, Bansud, Bongabong, Roxas, Mansalay, Gloria, Bulalacao, and Calapan in Oriental Mindoro; Agutaya and Taytay in Palawan; and Caluya in Antique. **DOT**

ON THE GROUND NEWS

Regional News Updates



MOU Signing between DOT NCR x Megaworld Lifestyle Malls

The Department of Tourism - Metro Manila and Megaworld Lifestyle Malls ink partnership to train some 150 mall frontliners on the Filipino Brand of Service Excellence

In pursuit of Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco's marching order to train 100,000 Filipino tourism workers this year, the DOT-NCR on Friday (10 March) joined hands with Megaworld Lifestyle Malls to provide venue across their 14 NCR-based premium malls and townships, and deliver trained frontline workers in tourism-related enterprises engaged in shopping and entertainment to train under DOT's signature program, the Filipino Brand of Service Excellence (FBSE).

The Tourism Chief envisions FBSE to help purvey to the world the Filipino tourism industry workforce as "beacons of hospitality who is ready and willing to receive tourists from all over the world."

Regional Director Sharlene Batin led the signing of this joint partnership with Megaworld Lifestyle Malls Vice President and Head for Mall Operations Rene Arnobit. Witnessing the event held at Eastwood Richmond Hotel, Quezon City are DOT-Office of Industry Manpower Development OIC Director Arlene Alipio, DOT-NCR Chief Catherine Agustin, and Megaworld Lifestyle Malls Asst. Vice President for Mall Operations Michael Lao.

The DOT-NCR has trained some 1,500 tourism workforce since January 2023. They aim to train a total of 6,250 tourism frontliners and workers by yearend. **DOT**

DOT extends its support to Isabela de Basilan's Goyak Sin Pagbuwan

By: Office of Undersecretary Myra Paz Valderrosa-Abubakar
Photos By: City Government of Isabela de Basilan and Isabela City Tourism Office

The Department of Tourism (DOT), through the Office of the Undersecretary for Mindanao, Myra Paz Valderrosa-Abubakar extended its assistance and support to the Goyak Sin Pagbuwan (Waves of Surprises) initiative of the City Government of Isabela de Basilan, under the leadership of City Mayor Sitti Djalila A. Turabin-Hataman.

Held on March 15 at the Mangrove Lagoon in Marang Marang Barangay, the Goyak Sin Pagbuwan initiative is anchored in the City Government's commitment to boost grassroot tourism in the region and to unveil the true beauty of Isabela de Basilan.

The turnover of floating cottages and startup kits is expected to empower and capacitate tourism frontliners and stakeholders in the said area.

The synergy project was a collaboration between the City Tourism Office, the City General Services Office, and the City Engineering Office, led by Mr. Eugene B. Strong and Acting City Engineer Reynaldo J. Dagohoy.

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Assistant Regional Director Imelda Gatinao and the DOT Undersecretary Valderrosa-Abubakar also extended their support by providing tourism startup kits and paraphernalia to empower and capacitate the beneficiaries and vowed to continue supporting Isabela City's tourism initiatives. **DOT**



DOT Region 2 holds Regional Farm Tourism Summit and Trade Fair

By: DOT-2

The Department of Tourism, Region 2, under the leadership of Regional Director Troy Alexander G. Miano, successfully staged the first Regional Farm Tourism Summit and Trade Fair at the Amancio Nicolas Agri-Tourism Academy in Cordon, Isabela, on March 13, 2023.

Various personalities in the farm and tourism industries graced the event and shared their invaluable presentations in various sessions designed for the summit. Assistant Secretary Christopher V. Morales acted as the Keynote Speaker and spoke about the theme, “Innovative, Inclusive, and Sustainable Farm Tourism in the Cagayan Valley Region.”

The Local Government Unit of Cordon expressed their appreciation and delight because their town was chosen to be the venue of this year’s regional farm tourism summit. The honorable Vice Mayor Abegail Sable, who represented Mayor Lynn M. Zuniega in her message, expressed the LGU’s support for the



tourism programs and activities of the Department.

RD Miano also took the opportunity to highlight the importance of the synergism of all the sectors of society, including the National Government, the Local Government Units, and the Private Stakeholders, in advancing tourism in the region. He also expressed gratitude to all the delegates, especially to the presence of Asec Morales, which showed the strong support of the Central Office for the programs of the region.

Other partnering agencies, like the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and Department of Agriculture (DA), also expressed their message of support and possible areas of partnership to strengthen the farm tourism industry in the region.

The summit presented three significant sessions that tackled important topics related to the theme of the regional farm tourism summit. Among the speakers who shed light on these topics



were Ms. Noime Liangco of the Amancio Nicolas Agri-Tourism Academy, Engineer Rolando Pedro of the DA, Mr. Randolph Cacacho of the DTI, and Mr. Christopher Musni of the Department of Science and Technology. A video presentation on the topic “Developing Rural Communities through Sustainable Farm Tourism” was also played, featuring Mr. Antonio “Al” Linsangan III.

DOT-Region 2 Senior Tourism Operations Officer Thomas G. Santos also presented the topic on the promotion of accredited tourism camps in the region. The National Secretary of the Samahan ng Sakahang Panturismo ng Pilipinas, Ms. Mary Corinne Mamba, also shared the Farm Tourism Program Updates of the Cagayan Valley Farm Tourism Association.

A total of 91 participants completed and participated in the regional farm tourism summit, including farm tourism owners, tourism officers, travel agencies and tour operators, transport operators, other line agencies, academe, and the LGUs. **DOT**



TOURISM RELATED EVENTS



Ceremonial switching of the Bataan-Cavite Interlink Bridge



Awarding of Tourism Ambassador title to Vanessa Anne Hudgens



Courtesy visit of United States Ambassador to the Philippines, H.E. Mary Kay L. Carlson



Listening Tour with Tour Guides and Associations



2023 Strategic Planning and Alignment Workshop for the Department's Foreign Offices



International Travel Festival - Philippines



Filipino Brand of Service Excellence Train-the-Trainer Program



Induction of Tourism Congress of the Philippines officers

DOT celebrates Women's Month Highlighting 16 Distinguished Women in the Tourism Sector

By: Office of Special Concerns

NCR

NCR: Shiela Alvarez-Yu

Shiela Alvarez-Yu is a Juris doctor and a young entrepreneur, she understood the importance of honoring her parents when she planned the establishment of Alvarez Park Café, carrying her family name. Alvarez Park, now a tourist destination, continues to spread the love that initially inspired her to create it by carefully maintaining the relaxing nature scenery where it stands, serving sumptuous dishes for its guests, and providing more job opportunities for the community where she is from.

CAR

CAR: Eulalie Dulnuan

Ms. Eulalie Dulnuan is an alumna of the University of the Philippines (UP) Diliman where she earned her degree in Tourism. She obtained a Master's Degree in Leisure, Tourism and Environment from Wageningen University and Research Center in the Netherlands. In various years, she served as a tourism officer at the national, provincial, and municipal levels. Her notable projects include the Nagacadan Open Air Museum and the formation of tourism organizations in Kiangnan, Ifugao.

I

I: Angel Alvarez-Lao

Angel Alvarez-Lao has been one of the Ilocos region's most accomplished industry partners and advocates for tourism. Starting out as a college instructor in the 1990s, she worked hard to become a full-time travel operator, bringing spending tourists to the Province of Ilocos Norte. Because of her skills, she was appointed to become Laoag City's official Tourism officer. During the pandemic, Lao helped provide a livelihood for women weavers by selling the popularly known Inabel fabric to the international community. She continues to exert her influence as a pillar of tourism in Northern Luzon and will always be a phenomenally powerful Pinay.

IV-A

IV-B

V

II: Grace Berbano-Ruiz

Ms. Grace Berbano-Ruiz is currently the Community Affairs Officer IV of the Cagayan

Economic Zone Authority. Through her leadership and commitment, she inspired her team to help the Santa Ana Community-Based Tourism Organization's (CBTO) members reach their full potential. During her leadership, three ASEAN CBT Awards have been given to the Palau Environmental Protectors Association (PEPA), demonstrating how this organization has upheld its high standards for both its products and services.

PEPA proceeded from being just the guardians of Palau Island to becoming a profitable community-based tourism organization with seven sub-groups, including the PEPA Weavers Association, Palau Island Tour Guides, Palau Island Women's Catering, Palau Island Reef Rangers, Palau Island SPA, Palau Island Honey Hunters Marketing Cooperative, and Palau Island Homestay.

III: Ma. Lourdes Carmella Jade Pangilinan

Ma. Lourdes Carmella Jade Pangilinan, better known as "Ching", started her stint as a City Tourism Officer in the City of San Fernando, Pampanga (CSFP) in 2006. During her leadership, the CSFP Tourism Office has consistently contributed to the city's multiple recognitions over the years, including the Most Business Friendly City of the Philippines Hall of Fame, one of the Most Competitive Cities of the Philippines, the Heritage Tourism awardee of the Association of Tourism Officers of the Philippines in 2006, and Tourism Hub in the Manila Times Most Liveable Cities in 2018.

IV-A: Jomelyn M. Abuan, MPA

Jomelyn M. Abuan, MPA is a Municipal Tourism Officer in Montalban, Rizal. She is currently the President of the Association of Tourism Officers of Rizal (ATOR) for 2023–2025. Ms. Abuan is an advocate of CBT in Montalban. She believes that CBT empowers the community to take full ownership of their area's individualized tourist industry as entrepreneurs, managers, service providers, and employees.

IV-B: Eva T. Valledor

Ms. Eva T. Valledor was born from a poor but happy family on an island in Cuyo, Palawan. Her successful business, Binuatan Creations in Puerto Princesa City, creates hundreds of jobs for Palawenos, especially women—mothers who cannot find jobs in other industries and students who are determined to finish their studies. If you visit her shop today, you will see mothers together with their

children showcasing the actual handloom weaving to guests and visitors in Palawan.

V: Maria "Nini" Ong Ravanilla

Maria "Nini" Ong Ravanilla served the longest as Regional Director of the Department of Tourism (DOT) Bicol, from 2000 to roughly 17 years. She veered the Bicol tourism industry to heights that led to a significant increase in domestic and foreign tourist arrivals, making the region one of the leading destination clusters in the Philippines. Her tourism, politics, and community service exploits made her an easy pick for many awards. She was dubbed the "Darling of the Bicol Media" during her tenure as DOT Regional Director. She was the first awardee of the Outstanding Albayano in Tourism by the Provincial Government of Albay Award in 2013 and consecutively bagged the Albay's Distinguished Albayano in Tourism Award in 2014. In 2015, she was also recognized as an Outstanding Partner for the Source of Information Report on Regional Economic Development of the Philippines 2015 by the Banko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

VI: Helen Javier Arguelles Cutillar

Helen Javier Arguelles Cutillar initiated a pro-community, pro-environment project on Suyac Island as a community laboratory. As an advocate of sustainable tourism, she organized five community-based ecotourism enterprises that afforded equitable wealth generation and uplifted their community through the dignity of livelihood and empowerment. With her passion and dedication, she helped her province receive notable tourism awards. Sagay City received the DOT-ATOP Best Tourism Practices Award, which earned at least 17 trophies, including the CBT and arts and culture programs in the past years.

VII: Governor Gwendolyn Fiel Garcia

Buhat ang Pasultihon

Gwendolyn F. Garcia is the first woman elected as governor of Cebu, the country's premier province. She served for three consecutive terms from 2004 to 2013, and is the only Cebu governor to ever come back for a fourth term in 2019. Under her watch, Cebu is debt free and the richest province in the country in terms of assets which stand at P215 billion, according to the 2021 COA report.

During the pandemic crisis, Cebu led the way for the entire country in terms of pandemic responses and post-pandemic recovery efforts. She was the first local chief executive to reopen tourism in as early as August 2020,

junked the required RT-PCR tests for travelers coming to Cebu, and made the wearing of face masks optional in open and well-ventilated spaces. While formerly controversial and heavily criticized, these policies have now been adopted by the national government for nationwide implementation. Her visionary leadership also salvaged Cebu from the pit of the disaster when the double whammy of the pandemic and Supertyphoon Odette devastated the province. Instead of letting the Cebuanos adopt a mendicant mentality, she introduced programs that have helped Cebuanos help themselves.

Today, she has become a unifying force in Cebu, with the entire island, including the highly urbanized tri-cities of Cebu, Lapu-Lapu and Mandaue, now looking to her for guidance in crafting important policies. Indeed, Cebu is now a One Cebu Island, thanks to the trailblazing leadership of Cebu's Iron Lady and the Governor of the People: Gwendolyn F. Garcia.

VIII: Governor Sharee Ann Tan

Governor Sharee Ann Tan is currently the Governor of the Province of Samar. Through her leadership, she has slowly transformed and developed the image of Samar as a pioneering sustainable tourist destination. As governor, she established the Spark Samar Development Program, which focuses on improving social services, rehabilitation of provincial hospitals, agricultural advancement, and the development of tourism province-wide. She championed the development of the Sohoton Natural Bridge and Caves Natural Park in Basey, the Ulot River TORPEDO Extreme Adventure in Paranas, the aesthetic lighting project of the San Juanico Bridge, and the promotion of the Secret Kitchens of Samar for Culinary Tourism, thereby helping the People's Organizations managing and working in these tourism enterprises to become independent and empowered.

IX: Marilou "Ludy" Silorio

Marilou "Ludy" Silorio is a former Chief Tourism Operations Officer of the DOT Region 9. She has worked with local communities and Local Government Units in Zamboanga Peninsula in raising tourism awareness, building stakeholder capacities, and developing sustainable tourism products while consciously aspiring towards mainstreaming marginal communities into the tourism value chain either as a destination or as a supplier community.

As a GAD advocate, she is also engaged in sensitizing tourism service providers to heighten the gender responsiveness of tourism services. Recently, she rekindled the cultural pride of the Subanen people in the Municipality of Siayan, Zamboanga del Norte, through a series of training that led to the development of the Siayan Training Peace Village.

X: Carina Dayondon

No mountains are too high to climb for Ms. Carina Dayondon, the first Filipina to reach the Seven Summits—the seven tallest mountains in every continent in the world.

Her training started with a climb at Mount Denali in 2005, the highest peak in North America. She climbed Mt. Everest with two other Filipinas and a support team the following year.

With Denali and Everest summited, Dayondon reached for the remaining mountains – Mount Kosciuszko in Australia, Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Mount Elbrus in Russia, Mount Aconcagua in Argentina, and Mount Vinson Massif in the snowy peaks of Antarctica. Dayondon's climb on the seven summits took her years of mental, physical, and financial preparations.

Dayondon consistently embodies humility before nature; as a mountaineer and a member of the Philippine Coast Guard, she treats nature with reverence. It proves that she is a champion woman with high respect for the environment, a distinct quality worth celebrating.

XI: Margarita "Margie" Moran-Floirendo

Maria Margarita Roxas Moran-Floirendo, professionally known as Margie Moran, is a Filipino beauty queen, actress, and peace advocate who was the president of Ballet Philippines and is the President of the Cultural Center of the Philippines. As the President of Ballet Philippines, she brought the company to perform in Canada, the USA, the Middle East, Europe, and Asia as cultural diplomats in promoting tourism. She worked in the tourist sector for 25 years as the CEO of Pearl Farm Beach Resort in the Island Garden City of Samal and the general manager of House of Travel. She is also a well-known supporter of women's rights and Mindanao's development. She previously worked for the organization as a trustee that was involved in community development in Habitat communities, where she oversaw the construction of 1,000 houses in Peace and Development communities in Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, General Santos, Sarangani Province, and North

Cotabato. She was a peace advocate and one of Mindanao's women leaders, chairing the Mindanao Commission on Women in Davao.

XII: Hannah Miranda Mamon

Hannah Miranda Mamon founded an advocacy of turning idle lands into sustainable farms through Project Earth, reaching areas of South Cotabato, Maguindanao, and Sarangani. To alleviate the pain of closing businesses and the challenges brought by the pandemic, she developed their guyabano plantation in August 2020; thus, "SG Farm" was opened. She also supports sustainable agri-tourism as they feature organic farming and sustainable practices, adapting greening programs with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). By gathering MSME sellers to produce local products for the tourists, she highlights the promotion of "B'laan culture" through their "Love Local" campaign, which includes their dance, accessories, and products.

XIII: Ikit Agudo

Ikit Agudo is a professional surfer and a local of General Luna, Siargao Island, and Surigao del Norte. Agudo has been competing in local and international surfing competitions, which eventually led her to becoming a silver medalist in the 2019 SEA GAMES Surfing Competition. Together with her friends, Ikit used her influence on Instagram and social media to spread awareness of what has happened on the island since the onset of Odette. She tapped the local and international organizations using their accounts on social media to raise funds for the affected communities. Agudo's team alone was able to help build over 120 houses for families that were badly affected by Odette. Over 1,000 families were given construction materials to help them rebuild their houses. Seven boats were also donated to fisher folks who solely rely on fishing to sustain their families' needs. They were also able to distribute relief packs to around 9,000 families on Siargao Island. **DOT**



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

TO OUR APRIL BIRTHDAY CELEBRATORS

1	Cecilio Cruz	10	Regielyn Dayag	21	Meralyn Ibanez
2	Edmund Tecson	10	Maricris Agustin	21	Norjannah Lucman
2	Elizabeth Andal	10	Michelle Gonzales	22	Joycelyn Barlomento
2	Orlando Bryan Du	11	Exequiel Erfelo	22	Ernest John Ola
4	Jocelyn Gamilla	11	Rhea Ison	23	Glenn Nhel Umandal
4	Jayson Carodan	11	Katherine Patawaran	24	Ronsan Pelariza
5	Sophiea Loren de Guzman	12	April Love Colarte	24	Ghienel Gustilo
5	Roldan Pineda	13	Francisco Franco	25	Mark Gregorio Samonte
6	Lillian Maunes	14	Warner Andrada	26	Ildefonso Pascual Jr.
6	Elaine Villanueva	15	Jeromehiah Castro	26	Romeo Caranguian Jr.
7	Antonio-Marie Siddayao II	15	Ghieanne Loren	27	Veronica Reyes
7	Imelda Basto	15	Stephen Roy Argosino	27	Ryan Tapayan
7	Denison Manuel	16	Esther Reyes	29	Frederick Castro
7	Keneth De Gracia	17	Artemio Ticar	30	Jaime Mar Jr.
8	Maria Janina Gonzalez	17	Khemille Zerine Alterado	30	Jericho Delfin
8	Maria Dalisay Legaspi	18	Stephen Dumpit	30	Victor Luis Padilla II
8	Lara Denisse Yerro	19	Kristane Ray Caducio	30	Liliosa Libosada
				30	Erlita Val Gumpal

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

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